

First approach to a Third Manifesto of Philosophy

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Abstract: Alain Badiou is a philosopher of epochal significance if only because he captures the fundamental crisis of the present age, and thus of history itself, in a manner that is both unique and compelling. He defines it as a crisis of its truth procedures, as the process in which science, art, politics and love are absorbed by technology, culture, administration and sex. In the operations of fidelity that seek to escape absorption, the following paper draws on early Heidegger and Sartre to develop a fifth procedure of truth. Not externally attached to other truth procedures, but inscribed within them, it is named here, in its essence and according to its subjectivity, the truth procedure of existence, but understood as the truth procedure of philosophy and its subject.

Keywords: Badiou; Foucault; Sartre; Heidegger; Hegel; existence; God; human; humanism without humanism.

The call we have just heard is directed rather
at all of humanity.
But at this point and at this moment
we are humanity, whether we like it or not.
Samuel Beckett 1971, p. 197. Cf. Badiou 2006a: 63
Translation from German.

Some of those days
you'll miss me, honey.
Jean-Paul Sartre 1981, p. 270, 272, 274.

If Alain Badiou's first commitment of thought is to defend philosophy against anti-philosophical scepticism, he follows the early Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre. This is already indicated in the title of his three-volume magnum opus *Being and Event* (1988/2006b, 2006/2010, 2018/2022), which explicitly refers to *Being and Time* (1927/1962) and *Being and Nothing* (1943/1996). What they have in common is "the triplet of being, the subject and truth" (Badiou 2011c, p. 117, cf. also Badiou 1998: 119), which the two earlier books explored in a "universal phenomenological ontology" that, as an "analytic of existence, has made fast the guiding-line for all philosophy at the point where it arises and to which it returns." (Heidegger 1962, p. 62)

Of course, the commonality in their commitment does not exclude differences: foremost among these is Badiou's decision not to make the subject of his thinking an "idea of existence in general" and its "authentic potentiality-for-Being-a-whole" (Heidegger 1962, p. 313 resp. p. 301 et seq., cf. §61ff) or even "desire to be God" (Sartre 1964: p. 724 et seq.) and therefore also not to assume any "primordial truth of existence" (Heide-

gger, loc. cit., p. 355). In this respect, the subject of his thinking is solely the particular and separate possibilities of subjectivation and existence that open up to human living beings through their participation in the four “truth processes” or “truth procedures” of art, science, politics and love. It is noteworthy at this point that, for the philosopher Badiou, philosophy does not produce its own truths, and therefore is not a truth process in its own right, nor does it encompass its own subjectivity. For Badiou, its special task lies solely in determining the epochal “compossibility” or the epochal “space of compossibility” of artistic, scientific, political and amorous truths – we will come back to this. (See above all Badiou 1998: 23, 53, 89, 115. Translation from German)

Badiou breaks with Heidegger at the moment when the Freiburg rector atones for his political betrayal of philosophy by turning to anti-philosophical scepticism. However, this does not detract from the recognition of his enduring indispensability; on the contrary, right at the beginning of his first major work, Badiou expressly states that Heidegger is “the last philosopher” who “can be universally recognised” (Badiou 2006b: 15. Translation from German). From a whole series of similar references elsewhere, the passage in the conversation with Fabien Tarby is particularly relevant to our context, in which Badiou specifies in a carefully considered list why the thinking of *Being and Time* is one of the first stipulations (not only) of his thinking: “Heidegger (was) a great thinker, even though he was a petty-bourgeois Nazi. This does not diminish the significance of many of his analyses, on temporality, on the *phenomenology of anxiety*, on *equal primordiality* (...), on the figures of alienation, on the history of philosophy, on poetry.” (Badiou/Tarby 2017: p. 106. Modified translation from German, emphasis added) Badiou’s repeated reference to the “rather beautiful text” in which Heidegger explains “that truth and freedom are basically the same thing: ‘the essence of truth reveals itself as freedom’” (Badiou 2015: 52. Cf. Heidegger 1954: 12). Finally, it is worth noting that Badiou explains in several places that he has incorporated Heidegger’s “stroke of genius” into the core of his own thinking, namely “to hold fast to the fundamental distinction between knowledge and truth, or thinking and cognition.” (Badiou 1999: 73)

Humanism and Anti-humanism

If Badiou’s relationship with Sartre is somewhat more complicated, it is because fidelity and distancing apply here to the philosophical teacher to whom Badiou owes the beginnings of his own thinking. It is no coincidence, and significant for us, that he expresses this in a manner that is impressive in its intellectual integrity, precisely in the interview with which his *Ethics* concludes – we quote in extenso: “What Sartre taught me was, I would say, simply, almost in a naïve sense, existentialism. But what does existentialism mean? It means maintaining a connection, a bond that can

be re-established again and again between the concept on the one hand and, on the other, the existentiell instance of choice, the instance of vital decision. The conviction that the philosophical concept is not worth an hour's effort if it does not, even through very complex mediations, respond to, illuminate and order the instance of choice and vital decision. *And in this sense, the concept must always be a matter of existence. Sartre taught me this.*" (Badiou 2003a: 137f. Translation from German. Emphasis added. Here and in the whole text we follow the distinction between 'dem Existenziellen' and 'dem Existenzialen' in Heidegger's *Being and Time*, which is rendered as 'Existentiell' and 'Existential' in the English translation.)

The reason for his distancing himself from Sartre lay in the latter's definition of existentialism as – in Badiou's pointed terms – "radical humanism." But although Badiou himself seems to take the side of a "radical anti-humanism" introduced by Foucault and thus diametrically oppose Sartre, the difference is far less clear-cut than the choice of words suggests – we quote again in extenso: "As is the wont of the dialectical thinking of contradictions, there is a unity of the two conflicting orientations. That is because both of them treat this question: What becomes of man without God? (...). Radical humanism and radical anti-humanism agree on the theme of Godless man as opening, possibility, programme of thought. That is why the two orientations will intersect (...) in particular in all the revolutionary episodes. (Badiou 2007, p. 171). In Badiou's own work, this dialectic is evident precisely at the point where he initially attributes to humans the status of mere animal beings. On the same page, this reductive thesis is followed antithetically by an ethically and politically charged concept of humanity, which is then immediately relativized dialectically by an insertion: "There is a two-part answer to this question. The first part is that humans are not at all different from animals. (...) The second part is that humans are capable of perceiving events. (...) This is what I would call – *if one absolutely wants to maintain this idea* – the humanity of humans in relation to animality. Yes, humans are entirely animals, but animals that, under certain conditions, are capable of doing things that cannot be derived from their animal nature." (Badiou/Ruda/Völker 2007: 45)

Correspondingly, the question of the conclusions to be drawn from the "two-part" nature of humans remains, for Badiou, even while writing his third major work, a philosophically and ethically-politically "open question" and thus an "unregulated problem." It depended and still depends on the possibility of asserting, alongside the subjects of science, art, politics and love, a "philosophical subject" and thus also the previously excluded possibility of a subject in general ("Subjekt überhaupt"). Philosophy would then still not produce its own truths, but in its own subjectivity it would nevertheless be a fifth truth process, in that it would have to work out not only the epochal compossibility of the truths of art, science, politics and love, but also their compossibility in general ("Kompossibilität über-

haupt”) based on an “primordial truth of existence”, which itself would be inscribed in all other truths and truth processes. We will come back to this. (See, among others, Badiou 2016: 76ff, Badiou/Tarby 2017: 126f). It should be noted, however, that Badiou himself did, ultimately, *not* take up this possibility. This marks the point at which we place our own intervention into the matter of thought itself. The phrase “matter itself” is chosen deliberately and highlights another commonality between Badiou, Sartre and Heidegger. For even though we will continuously and, where necessary, extensively quote passages from the three philosophers, we are not concerned with the philological question of how the aforementioned thinkers might be “read,” nor with the academic game of compensating the alleged weaknesses of one thinker with the supposed strengths of another. Instead, like them, we are concerned with the truly open question of the “humanity of human beings” as the highest of our possibilities, a possibility that unfolds not only in texts, but in the aforementioned triplet of being, subject or existence, and truth. Its internal dialectic is here the very subject of philosophical and ethical-political discourse.

The situatedness of universal truth

In the two manifestos he devoted to philosophy (Badiou 1989, 2009), Badiou reflects on the situational and temporal nature of his thinking, which does not contradict but rather enables an “approaching the absolute” (Badiou 2022: 321-373). While in *the First Manifesto for Philosophy* he focuses on its militant opposition to anti-philosophical scepticism, in *the Second Manifesto* he confronts an even more dangerous situation. In it, he sees not only philosophy but also its extra-philosophical conditions threatened in their very existence, insofar as “technology, culture, administration and sex have taken up the generic place of science, art, politics and love.” (Badiou 2011c: 120f)

This danger has since intensified to such an extent that philosophy can only defend itself by bringing itself and its last resources into play: a supreme effort that Badiou, in his book of the same title, has described as the effort of “metapolitics.” (Badiou 2003b)

First and foremost, it is important to emphasise the dialectical nature of the crisis of the present age. It is not simply understood as an empirically (ontically) tangible crisis of the given political-economic world order, but rather, in a manner not dissimilar to Heidegger, as an (ontological) crisis of being itself, and thus also of truths and their truth-subjects, which has broken out in the fourfold crisis of science, art, politics and love. In sharpening his difference from the late Heidegger, Badiou then writes that the danger of the eradication of science, art, politics and love, diagnosed by both of them, is not, or at least not solely, due to a (ontological) nihilism unleashed in the history of being and truth and thus in the metapolitical subjectivation of human beings, but rather to the profane-empirical (ontic)

“rule of capital” and its political economy, which he had just distanced himself from in the first move. In the third move, its prima vista nihilistic effect – the social enforcement of a “generalized atomism” that so radically “unbounds” being that “the reign of the manifold is unfathomable depths of what is presented without exception” – is expressly welcomed by Badiou in a seemingly surprising turn, because for him the resulting comprehensive “desacralization” of the world itself is a “necessary condition” for granting thought the access to being and truth that is so badly needed right now (Badiou 1999: 55f).

This, in turn, is because, for Badiou, the manifold, surrounded by nothing but the void, is in fact nothing more and nothing less than the ontological truth of being itself, revealed in the current crisis as radically as never before, and therefore also as our abysmal ground. In the perspective of this third move, Badiou abandons the late Heidegger, who was, as it were, taken along in the first move, in favour of the early Heidegger, who, in an equally surprising turn, had expressly welcomed the anxiety-filled “being held out into the nothing” as *Dasein*’s “transcendence,” which he understood as the literally meta-physical “transcending of being as a whole,” as the “authentic” movement of our being and thinking itself (Heidegger 2010, p. 106. The English translation of *Being and Time* consistently uses the German term “Dasein.” Cf. Heidegger 1962). Due to the specific Heideggerian use not only of the term ‘Dasein’, but also of the term ‘Existenz’, we will always use both of these German terms when appropriate.)

In doing so, the early Heidegger further clarified the unsecured processing of multiplicity in the void or the nothing by coining the neologism “Mannigfaltigung” (multiplication) for this primordial, i.e. unconditional process, a Mannigfaltigung/multiplication which as such also and precisely determines the being of Dasein. (Heidegger 1978: 171ff) In this way, the early Heidegger, like Badiou later, affirmed precisely the desacralising effects of this literally fundamental ontological insight and therefore programmatically conceived philosophy as “fundamentally atheistic” and, in this sense, as a “hand raised against God”. (Heidegger 2013: 29. Translation from German) Sartre, the third member of the trio, conceptualised the directional sense of transcendence, accomplished as a crossing over from the groundless, purposeless and unityless Mannigfaltigung/multiplication)of the manifold to the void or the nothing, from “mere” meta- to a rigorously “anti-physical” transcendence, thereby expanding the always ethically and politically reflected “hand raised against God” into a hand raised against any kind of nature understood as home, and ultimately into a hand raised against being itself. (Sartre 2000, p. 240, 243 and 2005, p. 30f., 257. Cf. also de Beauvoir 2000, in nuce p. 77. Translation from German). If the fundamental crisis-prone nature of human habitation in a being understood only as a Mannigfaltigung/multiplication of mere multiplicities is understood by all three philosophers as the basic fact, inescapably having to exist in a ceaselessly multiplying “not-at-home” (Heidegger 1962: 233f),

beyond which there is nothing but the void or the nothing, Sartre affirms the initially negative finding in view of its political potential as the “perpetual dream of anti-physis,” because only in such a space can the possible be “made possible by us” (Sartre 2005: 30f. Translation from the German including the neologism “vermöglchen”): “Anti-physis, classless society or emancipation of man” (Sartre 2000: 243. Translation from German) Badiou explicitly takes up the dark tone of this hope, which is drawn precisely from what is initially negative, insofar as, after the “deposition of the gods” and their afterlife, for him too “everything is here, always here, and (...) the power of thought lies in the egalitarian dullness that has a firm and declared experience of what is coming to us here.” (Badiou 2002a: 21. Translation from German) If there are truths in what befalls us that demand our fidelity, this does not mean, however, that this coincidence and our fidelity have a meaning that transcends us. On the contrary – and in counter-move to the later Heidegger: The truths appear “in absolute insignificance” because there is “no mystery of being,” but only “this bath of otherness,” which is “the anarchy of being (...), the absence of meaning (...): manifoldities that go into infinity and have nothing but meaningless void as their ultimate end.” (Badiou/Truby 2017: 68, 154; Badiou/Ruda/Völker 2007: 51f, in nuce also cf. Badiou 2002a: 195. Translation from German)

“There is only”/“except that”

However, although Badiou affirms the definitive “deliason” from every “one” and “whole” in *the Second Manifesto* as well, he is much more sceptical there about its effects on the four processes of truth. He therefore now explicitly seeks ways to defend the “active autonomy” of science, art, politics and love against their consumption in technology, culture, administration and sex (ibid.: 121). This is precarious, however, because for Badiou, a subjectivation of truths and thus their “active autonomy” exists only in the threatened procedures themselves – outside of them, for him, there are only “individuals,” i.e., human living beings who are no different from other living beings. In doing so, he directs the confrontation with the (ontic-ontological) crisis of being under the rule of capital philosophically, but also artistically, scientifically, politically and amorously, towards a critique of the epochal ruling ‘natural belief’, which he mainly in his second major work *Logics of Worlds* summarises under the name of ‘democratic materialism’. To this he attributes two interconnected and palpably nihilistic dogmas: “There are only individuals and communities” and “There are only bodies and languages.” In the course of a “materialist dialectic,” he then adds to these dogmas the phrase “except that there are truths,” whose power he derives precisely from their “except that.” The truths grasped in the status of their (Fr.) “sinon que” are thus neither additions or supplements to individuals and communities or bodies and languages, nor do they result from a synthesis in which they

would be expressions of the bodies named by language or condensations of communities in their individuals. Appearing only and exclusively in their “except that,” the truths of art, science, politics, and love, like their philosophically disclosed compossibility, are not something that is already (co-)given in or with bodies and languages or in and with individuals and communities. Instead, they are exceptions bursting forth from the void or the nothing, from and to the regime of bodies and languages or from and to the regime of individuals and communities. In an once again dialectical turn, however, they are then immanent to these regimes precisely as such exceptions, because and insofar as they withstand the ontological indisputability of the “nothing but” of bodies and languages or, individuals and communities: “There are only bodies and languages, except that there are truths.” And: “There are only individuals and communities, except that there are truths.” (Badiou 2010a, p. 17-25. Translation from German)

In the dialectical relation of the repeatedly juxtaposed dimensions of the truth- and being-historical/ (seins- und wahrheitsgeschichtlichen (metapolitical-ontological) and the (ontic-)political dimensions of the crisis, the concept of the “event” comes into play, which is the main concept of Badiou’s entire thinking, not only but also inspired by Heidegger. An event is always the event of a truth that, as a truth introduced by its event and thus eventful in itself, always appears in a particular historical situation and is therefore always particular because it is situated in time, space and history. The fact that every truth is universal and eternal despite its situatedness and thus in its temporal, spatial and historical locality and particularity results first and foremost from the circumstance that, in its immanent exceptional status, it cannot be derived from this situation itself and therefore cannot be limited to it. This *prima vista* paradoxical determination proves itself historically, insofar as it can be shown that and how a truth situated by its event as this truth can be “actualised” again and again, always anew and always differently in later situations and, understood in this way, is indeed eternal – at least as long as there are events and people who bear witness to it by remaining faithful to them. (Cf. in nuce Badiou 2022, p. 19 and *ibid.* in the introduction by Kenneth Richards, p. 15. Cf. also in the Second manifesto, p. 129)

Back to the most radical individuation

However, we have now reached the point of our own intervention, where we inscribe the truth procedure of existence and its own specific truth into the truth procedures of art, science, politics and love. While Badiou himself has repeatedly discussed (and consistently rejected) this possibility, as mentioned at the beginning of this article, a particularly eminent passage on this topic can be found, significantly, in the very last sentence of his second manifesto. There he refers emphatically to Jean-Arthur Rimbaud’s verse in which the poet articulates his desire to possess “the truth in one

soul and one body” (ibid.: 118). The truth of this verse is “existentiell” in a radical sense because Rimbaud is not referring to the participation in one or the other truth procedure, but rather to precisely that “potentiality-for-Being-a-whole” (in one soul and one body), which the early Heidegger had sought in the one and “primordial truth of Existenz,” for us enabling inscribed in the truths of science, art, politics, and love (Heidegger 1962: 264, 343, 355). According to Heidegger, its distinction from all other truths lies in “the possibility and necessity of the most radical individuation,” in which a Dasein makes its very Existenz a procedure of truth, which in its mineness (“Jemeinigkeit”) is at the same time the truth of all existing beings, and therefore also imposed on their universal phenomenology. (ibid., p. 62). If this Dasein in its being is not a synthesis of body and language or of individual and community that can be grasped in however way, it is because Heidegger would have already contested taking bodies and language or individuals and communities as the starting point. He therefore would not have expressed the two dogmas of “democratic materialism,” which he himself too had declared to be the enemy of thought, in these already democratic-materialistic formulations, but would have attributed to them, without any loss of critical acuity, the phrase “There are only forms of life and language games,” borrowed conceptually from Ludwig Wittgenstein. The seemingly insignificant difference then lies in the fact that the not merely synthetic but always already performed unity of life form and language game, albeit constantly modifying itself historically, constitutes his own concept of “Dasein” in its manifold forms. As the phenomenology of its “average everydayness” expounded in *Being and Time* shows, this Dasein is so completely and unreservedly absorbed in its life forms and language games that, as Heidegger aptly puts it, “proximally and for the most part” it is nothing but these life forms and language games: There is literally nothing hidden “behind” them – except for the nothing that Badiou calls the void, albeit in a variation that is not merely terminological. Nothing but also the possibility of an event that breaks into the life forms and language games of Dasein from this nothing or the void and presents it with their “primordial truth” as the “truth of its Existenz”.

The initial advantage of this approach would be that the phenomena of human life and speech would not have to be located in animality in a “first part,” i.e., they would not have to be reduced to phenomena of animality. Instead, they are granted their own being from the outset, the being of a living, speaking Dasein that is thus always already “befindlich” (in German both: “located” and “tuned”) in a world carried out linguistically and physically. This Dasein, alienated from itself (once again) “proximally and for the most part” in its life forms and language games, yet nevertheless generic in itself, then unexpectedly and inconceivably encounters, in declaredly rare moments, the “except that” of the truths that happen to it.

Heidegger clarifies this generic-existential openness to the accidental “except that” of its truths through the radical distinction between Dasein

and Existenz, which Badiou and many other reviewers have not sufficiently appreciated and which, incidentally, Heidegger himself did not always maintain. According to this difference, Existenz and the truth it attests to are not, as Badiou rightly demands, given as properties with or in Dasein, but are nothing more than a de facto rare and always momentary, and therefore always indeterminate, i.e. eventful possibility of Dasein. With definitional clarity and rigour, yet necessarily radical because of its unconditional indeterminacy, this truly decisive difference is captured in *Being and Time* in the categorical, i.e. existentially meant, sentence: “Dasein always understands itself in terms of its existence – in terms of a *possibility* of itself: to be itself or not itself.” (Heidegger 1962, p. 33, italics mine) In the appendix to the 1929 published Kant book, only made available in the complete edition, Heidegger explains this distinction with regard to its always only possible, i.e. never predetermined and never assured “except that” of the eventful, momentary chance of a truth – I therefore quote in extenso: “What I call Dasein is essentially determined not only by what is called spirit, and not only by what is called life, but what matters is the primordial unity and immanent relatedness of a human being who is, in a sense, bound in a body and, in this bondage to the body, stands in a unique relationship with beings, is located in the midst of it, not in the sense of a spirit looking down, but in the sense that Dasein, thrown into the midst of beings, as a free being, makes an incursion into this beings that is always historical and, in a final sense, accidental. So accidental that the highest form of Dasein’s Existenz can only be traced back to very few and rare moments of Dasein’s duration between life and death, *that the human being only exists in very few moments, but otherwise move in the midst of its being.*” (Heidegger 2010, p. 289f; translation from German, emphasis added) This passage was quoted in its entirety because its last sentence once again and unambiguously confirms its compatibility with Badiou’s intention to think of the subject of a truth as an immanent exception to the regimes of bodies and languages or individuals and communities. If it is said by definition that Dasein “moving in the midst of its being” from birth to death “exists only in very few moments,” then its Existenz cannot be given in itself, in Heidegger’s words, it cannot belong to the beings “present-at-hand” or “ready-to-hand”, i.e., it cannot be an object of knowing cognition and productive practice. It therefore cannot be any specific property of this Dasein. Instead, it can and must be nothing but a pure performance, can and must be nothing but an act – but also a performance and an act that is not in a “first part” animalistic but instantaneous and always already existential at the same time, i.e., generic – as the immanent exception of this Dasein from itself, which “is” its authentic Existenz.

Because this is so, even Dasein’s truth, grasped in and with its Existenz, is not his ever-present and therefore unlosable possession, but rather nothing more than a possibility that suddenly befalls him and often immediately escapes him again, his perhaps most radical and therefore

only in the indissoluble “equiprimordially” of the contradictions to be decided upon abandoned both-as-well-as: “Dasein is equiprimordially both in the truth and the untruth.” (Heidegger 1962, p. 265) The indissolubility of this both-and therefore also forms the core of the equally indissoluble “ambiguity” of all life and speech of Dasein, whose abysmal precariousness Heidegger captures in the equally abysmal sentence: “Everything looks as if it were genuinely understood, genuinely taken hold of, genuinely spoken, though at bottom it is not; or else it does not look so, and yet at bottom it is.” (ibid., p.217) This ambiguity therefore only presents once again only eventful, i.e. only in the unforeseen and unpredictable moments of rupture that Heidegger seeks to unfold in his phenomenology of anxiety, which Badiou explicitly adopts in his work and Heidegger in turn owes to Sören Kierkegaard. The anxiety that constantly assails Dasein is the “basic state-of-mind” (“Grundbefindlichkeit”) of its being, under whose always unexpected and never intended coincidence, or rather occurrence, it is dislodged from its everyday forms of life and their familiar language games, but also and precisely from their “They-Self” (Man-Selbst) of the Being-with (Mitsein) of Dasein and Dasein, which combines all alienations. (ibid., p. 225 et. seq.) Only with the anxiety-filled dislocation from the They does a Dasein enter into the exceptional possibility of its Existenz as its always only respective Being-in-truth – if it does not, as is and remains the case “proximally and for the most part,” escape into a briefly interrupted but then inconsequentially continued being-and-remaining-in-untruth, in which it returns under its domination “by the way things are publicly interpreted” (ibid., p. 254) A little later, Heidegger devoted a phenomenology, also inspired by Kierkegaard and detailed over 150 pages, to the “basic state-of-mind” of boredom, which he endowed with the same force (Heidegger 1983, p. 89-245); in Sartre, nausea plays a similar role to that of anxiety. Unexpected, momentary and therefore also unintentional, nausea, boredom and anxiety are, in the strict sense of the word, events of existence and, as such, are to be understood as events of what Heidegger, with equal rigour, calls the “primordial truth of Existenz”. This definition must be understood strictly because it can only be grasped literally in the “Ur-Sprung” (“Ursprung”, the German word for “origin”, literally means “primordial leap”) in which a Dasein first springs up its truth and thus its never ready- or present-to-hand given Existenz in order to remain faithful to it permanently, i.e. until its death, if successful.

However, to return to the point at hand: both “before” and “after” this leap, we are never just animals, not even “human animals,” but always Dasein, i.e., a being that is generic insofar as it is characterised by the possibility of a singular Existenz, which as such is never more, but also never less than a possibility, “something” at least that, as far as we know, does not apply to animals. In order to see what this ontological emancipation of our being from animality into what is understood as primordial humanity has gained for the crisis of truths, we now turn to the question

of how, in the Being-with of Dasein and Dasein, the possibility of a multi-headed Ko-Existenz, i.e. a shared Being-in-truth, can arise. This is necessary because, like any truth, the “truth of Existenz” can only prove itself in its ultimate validity through the at least possible participation of all in this truth, all without exception. But it is also necessary because the crisis of truths was imposed on us under specifically capitalist, i.e. political-economic, rule and is therefore also an ethical-political crisis.

Questions of method

First, however, we must take a closer look at the ontological difference in which Heidegger distinguishes between beings present- or ready-to-hand (objects produced by practice or knowing cognition) and beings in the mode of Dasein (possibility of Existenz). If the beings present- or ready-to-hand are grasped in conceptual understanding along the categories that apply to it, the conceptual understanding of Dasein and Existenz is not oriented by categories, but by “existentialia.” (Heidegger 1962, p. 79 et seq) Strictly speaking, they are of course categories, but ones that are intended to reveal the being of Dasein and its possibility of existence purely as a possibility, i.e. as an eventful act or performance, and thus separate it from the categorically determinable (ready- or present-to-hand) beings, which also include animal beings.

If the specific status of these existentialia in their ontological difference from categories is still controversial and difficult today, it is because they are supposed to grasp, in a generalisation that is not meta- but transhistorical, a being that exists only as “in each case mine” and “at the time” (“jemeinig” and “jeweilig”, cf. the glossary of German expressions in Heidegger 1962: 513), i.e. only in radically historical singularity: “Dasein is at time (“in der Juewelligkeit”, TRS); insofar as it is what it can be, it is in each case mine (“jemeinig”, TRS). The determination is a consistent, constitutive one in this being. Those who cross it out have lost what they are talking about in their subject matter.” (Heidegger 1989, p. 15; translation from German). According to the duality of life forms and language games primordially constituting Dasein, Thomas Rentsch has resolved this difficulty – of losing in conceptual generalisation precisely what is meant in its pre-conceptual singularity (“Jemeinigkeit” und “Juewelligkeit”) – with methodological rigour: “Existentialia do not name characteristics of human beings, but forms of life situations. They must not be misunderstood as theoretical entities, but are hermeneutic guidelines for an a priori analysis of the human situation. Their universality does not consist in simply asserting their validity for all situations in life, but in the methodological insight that they outline guiding questions that cannot be dispensed with for a phenomenological description of the form of life as a whole. As transcendental concepts of the form of life, they stand, as it were, like headings above the task of narrative phenomenology that is then to be

accomplished, which must be oriented towards our experiences and our language games in life.” (Rentsch 2003, p. 168f; translation from German).

The difference between Dasein and Existenz (as the exception to Dasein that is immanent to it) must therefore be supplemented by the difference between the “existential” and the “existentiell”: “Existential” are the forms of linguistically articulated forms of life associated with the phenomenological description of Dasein and Existenz, while “existentiell” are the respective, always singular acts and performances themselves, whose universality must then be constantly re-proven by phenomenological description, since relevant modifications cannot be ruled out. It should be noted that Heidegger was methodologically and thematically aware of the necessarily and permanently problematic character of the transhistoricity of his existentiale. He attributed essential modifications of the existential structure to the “primitive Dasein” explored by ethnology, which are evident in its use of signs (Heidegger 1962: 76ff) and even more so in its temporality (Heidegger 2010: 255ff). These modifications could be so profound that the primacy of “futurity” or “project” resp. “projection” attributed to Dasein in an existential sense would have to be historically limited to the extent that “primitive Dasein” might conversely have to be attributed a primacy of “throwness” or “having been”. What is important for us here is not the correctness or incorrectness of the statements on “primitive Dasein” and its obviously problematic designation, but rather the problematisation of the historicity of the existentiale.

This context then raises the question, which is not only methodological but also ethical, of whether Kierkegaard’s and – always forgotten, not to be forgotten! – Max Stirner’s foundation of Dasein and Existenz on its mineness and Being-at-time, later affirmed by Heidegger and Sartre, is affected by Badiou’s critique of the “merging of subject and individual”, which he attributes to a tradition stretching from Descartes to Sartre – one of the reasons why his renunciation of a subject in general implies the renunciation of “ethics in general”. (In nuce Badiou 2013, p. 19 and Badiou 2003a: 28. Cf. Stirner 1995) Badiou would be right if the “jemeinig-jeweilige” Existenz, which Stirner conceives as always “unique” (“einzig”), referred only to the psychophysical private person in the sense of his formula “There are only individuals and communities”. In the conceptual duality of the existential and the existentiell, however, this accusation can be rejected insofar as Dasein and Existenz in this duality are never meant *only* as such an individual, but always as a potentially “singular universal” or a “besonderes Allgemeines” (Sartre 1975, p. 123-151, emphasis mine). For this reason, immediately after completing their first major works, both Heidegger and Sartre attempted an existential-existentiell revision of the Kantian ethics – Heidegger in lectures in the late 1920s/early 1930s, Sartre in the drafts for his moral philosophy, which he never completed but which he programmatically expounded in his 1951 lecture on humanism. Heidegger summarised their common point in 1929/30 in an imperative

that he himself shamefully betrayed shortly afterwards: “To transform the humanity of us humans into our own Dasein.” (Heidegger 1983: 509; translation from German) However, this imperative then constitutes – and this is the point of our intervention – an “ethics in general” which, with Kant, radically formal interprets Dasein as a ‘purposefulness without purpose,’ whose practical determination is then left to the freedom of each Existenz in its “mineness.” Significantly, Badiou touches on this point when he points out that Samuel Beckett, the writer most important to him, also refers to Kant’s general ethical formula in the innermost commitment of his prose: “For I dared to contemplate the task I had to perform only when I placed it in this atmosphere – how shall I put it – of purposefulness without purpose – why not?” (Badiou 2006a: 67. Beckett 1975: 130; translation from German) We will meet Beckett again here.

Returning at this point to the question posed earlier about human Co-Existenz, the existential-existential revision of the Kantian ethics leads us to Sartre’s existential revision of Hegel’s dialectic. With it comes the “desire of being” (Sartre 1966: 721 et. seq) already mentioned here, to make oneself not only the Dasein of “humanity of us humans,” but an Dasein that, like God, would be its own cause and in this sense not only existential, but also existentially generic, i.e., of its own origin and in this sense an end in itself.

On Life and Death I

The central importance of this point in *Being and Nothing* is evident from the fact that, according to my count, the book returns to it no fewer than nine times in its concluding section, in some cases over several pages. (Sartre 1966: 712-799). If the realisation of becoming God or generic ultimately fell to the “absolute spirit” in the case of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, who was decisive for Sartre here, the agreement between Hegel, Sartre and also Heidegger hinges on the concept of the “self.” Hegel states in one of the most important passages of his *Phenomenology* that it – this self in its existentiell singularity – is “putting the life of the absolute spirit into practice.” (Hegel 2018, p. 458) However, if Sartre, unlike Hegel, does not consider what Hegel already considered achieved to be achievable at all, i.e. never truly attainable, this does not rob his own dialectic of the élan necessary for its continued “putting into practice” – on the contrary: when Sartre describes the desire to be God in the last sentence of *Being and Nothing* as a “useless passion,” he does not mean to say that human-reality should renounce this passion or could even renounce it (Sartre 1966: 784). In a nutshell: Sartre’s talk of the desire to be God is a concept borrowed from religious experience and language to describe a way of being that, philosophically speaking, can no longer be rationalised in terms of an “absolute spirit,” but rather in terms of absolute Existenz. This implies that “human reality” – Sartre’s translation of the term Da-

sein – follows this passion not only in special moments, but already in its “average everydayness,” and then especially in all the acts that Badiou assigns to the procedures of truth: in art, science, politics, and love. The last two procedures, i.e. politics and love, are of particular importance here – a distinction that Badiou himself also makes and explains in detail (Badiou 2022: 469-587). This, in turn, is because, according to the dialectic of absolute Existenz understood in this way, has its origin and actual locus in the dialectic of master and slave, which Sartre explicitly continued by inscribing it into human reality itself. Its decisive moments are, first, an primordial (self-)awareness of the generic and therefore non-animal character of this reality, which is always “being-for-itself,” i.e., singular in itself, and second, the “equiprimordial” necessity of sharing this ever-present truth co-existentially, i.e., of proving it as the truth of all human reality. For Sartre, “Hegel’s brilliant intuition” (Sartre 1966: 321) consists in the fact that existential-existential beings can and must communicate this truth to each other only in a life-and-death struggle. This is because only “putting one’s own life in the line” (Hegel 2018: 111) proves the difference that existentially separates human reality from the mere life of animality. If all animal life is subject to the natural compulsion for self-preservation, Dasein in its generic freedom and truth can “risk and bear the loss of everything and anything”: “To know its limits means to know that it is to sacrifice itself” (Hegel 2018: 223 and 466. See also Rudhof-Seibert 2023).

We do not need to trace the dialectic of master and slave in its complex world-historical course here, but can limit ourselves to the three moments that are essential (not only) for Sartre. The first has already been mentioned and took place in the very first struggle, which phenomenologically marks the beginning of the entire history. According to Hegel, this very origin of world history does not end in what is ultimately merely a chance victory for one party, favoured by muscle power, skill and the luck of the moment, but with the subjugation of the other party, who prefers to survive in servitude rather than “put his own life in the line” and thus helps his opponent to attain the position of master. The history that followed and continues to unfold is dialectical because human reality, in its generic and that respect inalienable freedom, has always revolted against all conditions of domination and servitude and will continue to do so.

The second moment lies in Sartre’s sceptical reservation, already mentioned here, against Hegel’s resolution of the dialectic of master and slave. According to Sartre, the “desire of being” of human reality for its absolute Existenz is so radical that it cannot be pacified under any circumstances, and therefore its “antiphysis” becomes both a “useless passion” and a “perpetual dream” – a circumstance that, for the Marxist Sartre, would remain decisive even in a communist society. According to Sartre, the truth of human Co-Existenz therefore lies in the never-ending, perpetual conflict: “The for-itself is the foundation of all negativity and all relation. The for-itself is relation. Such being the case, the upsurge of

the Other touches the for-itself in its very heart (...) Conflict is the original meaning of being-for-others.” (Sartre 1966: 472f, 475).

On Life and Death II

The third moment combines the first two and owes more to Heidegger than to Sartre, although Heidegger never adequately addressed the master-slave dialectic. At the same time, this third moment allows us to reject the reservations that both Sartre and Badiou raised against Heidegger’s conception of Dasein as “being-towards-death.” (Sartre 1966, p. 680-707; for Badiou, see, among others, 2022, p. 176ff; for Heidegger in nuce, see, of course, Heidegger 1962, p. 279-311) As in the relationship between Dasein and Existenz, there is also an insurmountable difference here, which Heidegger understands as the difference between the initially and mostly lived inauthentic being-towards-death and the authentic being-towards-death lived only in rare moments, or, more precisely, as the difference between being-towards-death and the existential “freedom towards death” that is always only grasped by a few and always only in an eventful, momentary way: “Anticipation reveals to Dasein its lostness in the they-self, and brings it face to face with the possibility of being itself, primarily unsupported by concerned solicitude, but of being itself, rather, in an impassioned freedom towards death—a freedom which has been released from the illusions of the ‘they’, and which is factual, certain of itself, and anxious.” (ibid., p. 311)

To explain this point in the brevity required here: when Sartre and Badiou follow Spinoza against Heidegger, according to whom a “free man (...) thinks of nothing less than death” because his “wisdom (...) is not a reflection on death, but a reflection on life” (Spinoza 1976, p. 247. Cf. Badiou 2022: 176), then they mean what Heidegger, for his part, refers to as “perishing” (“Verenden”) and “demise” (“Ableben”), i.e., death merely “as a phenomenon of life.” (Heidegger 1962: 284, 290f) When Heidegger, on the other hand, speaks of death as both existential and existentiell, as a phenomenon *not only* of life *but*, in the true sense, of Dasein itself, he does not mean the moment or the more or less brief period of perishing and demise, but rather the relationship to death that is realised in Dasein as an eventful, momentary “anticipation of death” (“Vorlaufen zum Tod”), for which he reserves the existentielle “Dying” (“Sterben”, ibid.: 291). In a definitional distinction from the dying and passing away meant by Spinoza, Sartre and Badiou: “*Death is a way to be, which Dasein takes over as soon as it is.*” (ibid.: 289) Only from this existentially accomplished relationship with death can a being – in Spinoza’s words – attain the “wisdom” of its “freedom towards death,” thinking of nothing less than its perishing and demise, because its wisdom is not a reflection on demise and perishing, but a reflection on Existenz and existing. This wisdom does not need to be expressed in words, but has implicitly guided all those who exist and

who have decided in freedom to “put one’s life on the line.” Because this wisdom belongs to freedom, i.e. the free relationship to death, it has also led in countless cases to refraining from such “putting in line” at the given time – what is decisive is not recklessness, but the existential performance of the free relationship to death. Its particularity can only be surmised from the outside: even if the entire dialectic of master and slave is rightly based on the relationship between domination and servitude beginning in world history with the death-fleeing submission of the first servile self, no one will ever really be able to know whether the renunciation of “putting one’s life on the line” was not made in a conscious, i.e. knowing and free decision. This reservation does not alter the fact that any overcoming of a relationship of domination always depends on the decision to risk one’s life – this and nothing else is the core of the “primordial truth of Existenz”: its very essence of being and thinking. Badiou and Sartre’s critique of Heidegger’s concept of “being-towards-death” remains valid if it is understood not as a critique of being-towards-death, but of being-towards-perishing and dying, which constitutes the existentiell core of democratic materialism – Heidegger would agree with this. The fact that Badiou, conversely, came close to the authentic being-towards-death and, at the same time, not coincidentally, to Sartre’s associated existentialism of “useless passion” can be glimpsed in an admirably literary and philosophical way in the interpretation he devoted to Samuel Beckett’s for him most important book, *Worstward Ho* (Beckett 1989). He describes this book, with direct reference to Heidegger, as a “stenogram on the question of being” (Badiou 2001, p. 121; translation from German). If we deliberately speak here of “only” an inkling, it is because the following section deals with the philosophical determination of a truth of art (Beckett’s prose) and thus with a core task of philosophy, but of the thirteen concept or names introduced there in an extraordinarily dense sequence, only five belong to philosophy (being, void, nothing, being, thinking), five belong to literature (turbidity, skull, head, grave, cemetery), two belong to both registers (words, humanity), and one belongs in a controversial way to the special debate between Badiou, Sartre and Heidegger (Existenz), which is our own topic. We offer this reservation as a guide to the reading. (ibid., pp. 119-161, all translations from German)

O turbidity, pass away!

Worst Ho is important first and foremost because Badiou, together with Beckett, discusses the void and the nothing that, in his ontology, surround or envelop the groundless, purposeless and uniform Mannigfaltigung/multiplication of multiplicities. Badiou takes the concept of “turbidity” (ibid., p. 122) from Beckett’s “Stenogram” as the third name of being, which he then relates directly to Heidegger’s ontological difference in its distinction from the void: “Heidegger was aware of this with being and beings.” If

being as the first condition – “so that there is a question at all” – is given the “singular name void,” it needs the name of turbidity to grasp pure being (void) in its “appearance”: “Being as the enabling of appearance is turbidity,” in Heidegger’s words: the existing. (ibid., p. 129) Nothing, in turn, holds void (being) and cloudiness (the existing) together in their difference: “Fusion of void and turbidity in nothing.” (ibid., p. 145)

In turbidity, i.e. among the manifold beings that multiply themselves, there is then one very special being that first conceives and articulates the entire constellation of being, nothing and beings, or of being, void and turbidity, i.e. puts it into words. Badiou bestows upon this thinking and therefore speaking being the name “humanity,” which he then, following Beckett, defines more precisely with the names “head” and “skull”: “The head (is) reduced in its representation, on the one hand, essentially to its eyes and, on the other hand, to its brain, from which words seep: two holes in the front of the skull, that is thinking (...), thinking in the form of existence as a skull.” (ibid., pp. 125-127). With the thinking being – humanity, the head or skull and the words seeping from this skull – Beckett, and subsequently Badiou, introduce another, final name for being: “What was turbidity, void or an unnameable place becomes a graveyard. (...) What is the symbol of existence other than the gravestone on which the erased name and the equally erased dates of birth and death are inscribed? (...) Neither murkiness nor void, but graveyard.” (ibid., 158f)

The goal of this dense and beautiful philosophical excursion into the truth of art (literature, prose poetry) is, however, an ethical one. On the one hand, Badiou refers to Beckett’s constantly repeated phrase about walking or continuing to walk: “Try again. Fail again. Better. Or worse. Fail worse. Even worse again. Until sick forever. Throw up forever. Go forever. Where neither forever. Always and forever.” (ibid., p. 134. Beckett 1989: 9, translated from German) On the other hand, however, he refers to the title of the book itself, which indicates the direction of moving on: “Worstward Ho. Towards the worst.” The directional indication summarises the meaning of moving forward in the concept of “passing away”, which refers to the grave and thus to the cemetery, the last name of being: “O turbidity, pass away.” (ibid., p. 147. Beckett 1989, p. 23) Regarding the first phrase, that of moving towards the worst, Badiou then says in his decisive intervention that it should not be understood as a mere description, but as an ethical imperative: “We must remain on course for the worst. Towards the worst is an imperative,” namely the imperative of walking as speaking or saying and thus of having to continue speaking or saying (ibid., p. 136 et seq.). He then summarises the second turn, that of passing away, as the “hypothesis of absolute passing away” presupposed by the imperative in our minds, i.e. in our thinking, but then says that it fails and must fail: “The ‘O turbidity, pass away’ remains ineffective. As we have seen, one can always say ‘O turbidity, pass away’, but the turbidity does not care at all. What is important for us here is that the mind is incapable of passing

away, except, of course, when the turbidity passes away, that is, when everything passes away.” (ibid., 147f)

Immortality

Badiou has thus placed Beckett at the centre of his own ethics – or allowed Beckett to place him there. It is, above all, an “ethics of truths” that, in the status of “except that,” eventfully approaches what alone “is,” that is, bodies and languages or individuals and communities. The “sole principle” of such an ethics is therefore “the possibility of the impossible”: “The possibility of the impossible, which is exposed by every loving encounter, every scientific re-foundation, every artistic invention and every sequence of emancipatory politics, is the sole principle - against the ethics of living -,well whose real content is the deciding of death - of an ethic of truths.” (Badiou 2011b, p. 39). With regard to our own and our-shared Existenz, the ethical “possibility of the impossible” requires us to become “immortal” in our need to continue and to speak: “But Man, as immortal, is sustained by the incalculable and the un-possessed. He is sustained by non-being (non-etant). To forbid him to imagine the Good, to devote his collective powers to it, to work towards the realization of unknown possibilities, to think what might be in terms that break radically with what is, is quite simply to forbid him humanity as such. (ibid., p. 14. On the “immortal,” see also pp.10, 12, 15f,27, 32, 35, 41, 43, 49ff, 55, 59, 61, 67, 71, 74ff, 78f, 82, 84, 86) However, Badiou then explains this statement, which at first glance seems diametrically opposed to the existential truth of freedom to die, as follows: “The Immortal exists only in and by the mortal animal. Truths make their singular penetration (percée) only through the fabric of opinions. We all need to communicate, we must all express our opinions. It is we ourselves, as ourselves, who expose ourselves to the becoming-subject. There is no history other than our own; there is no true world to come. The world as world is, and will remain beneath the true and the false. There is no world that might be captive to the coherence of the Good. The world is, and will remain, beneath Good and Evil. (...) Its sole being lies in the situated advent (l’advenue en situation) of a singular truth. So it must be that the power of a truth is also a kind of powerlessness.” (ibid., p. 85. Emphasis added)

The fact that we are nevertheless in a space of compossibility in this world, which Badiou’s philosophy shares with that of Heidegger and Sartre, follows, on the one hand, from the latter circumstance, namely that the power of a truth is always a powerlessness and remains so: it makes the ethical imperative of having to pass on the possibility of an impossibility into what Sartre called the “useless passion” that we can neither abandon nor be allowed to abandon. Secondly, it follows from a closer definition of the concept of immortality. This does not, of course, refer to the *im-mortality* that is ontologically denied to us as mortal beings. Rather,

it refers to the *im*-mortality we achieve when we do not shut ourselves away in our mortality, but consciously step out of it into the not-at-home (or further), i.e. transcend it, where our freedom is the “essence of truth”. According to Badiou, Heidegger revealed this essence of truth, which is equiprimordial with freedom, in the “rather beautiful text” of the same title – the term “essence” being taken in a verbal sense, as it is everywhere in Heidegger, Sartre and Badiou. The discussion conducted here so far only has to add that we are not “mortal animals,” but have always been mortal immortal beings, humanity of us humans in our own and unique Dasein and Existenz. With Heidegger, it should be specified here that the existential symbol of being, the grave, and thus the name of being, the graveyard, belong to Existenz, i.e. to a free relationship with death.

The ugliness and beauty of truths

If we now – which is the aim pursued here – relate the immortal, passionate truth of Existenz to the crisis of truths that Badiou diagnoses in the current state of science, art, politics and love it proves to be the reserve that the fidelity to truths must activate if it is to survive this crisis and, if successful, overcome it. This is also because philosophy can now specify what constitutes the *compossibility of truths in general* beyond their epochal compossibility. This brings into play yet another commonality between Badiou, Sartre and Heidegger, which has already been mentioned here. For although our truths are articulated in words that seep out of a head with two eyes sitting in the front of the skull, this does not mean that their articulation is, in the traditional sense, merely a matter of seeing and saying. Despite his reservations about a “truth of Existenz,” Badiou has explicitly recognised Kierkegaard’s, Heidegger’s and Sartre’s phenomenology of anxiety as the “basic state-of-mind” of Dasein (similar to boredom and disgust). This implies, first of all, the insight that truths are not only a matter of seeing and saying, but always also of affectivity – in the case of the truth of being (and Dasein), namely that of anxiety, boredom and disgust. Badiou, for his part, has therefore also assigned a primary affect, i.e. a basic state of mind, to the truths of art, science, politics and love. In doing so, he counters the truth of being as the “not-at-home” of the turbid Mannigfaltigung/multiplication of the multiplicities everywhere surrounded by the void and the nothing, revealed in the event of anxiety, first of all with the affect of happiness that constantly accompanies the fidelity with which a subject binds itself to an artistic, scientific, political or amorous truth. Happiness as the unambiguously positive affectivity of fidelity – Badiou has devoted an entire book to it (Badiou 2016) – is then differentiated once again in relation to the single truth procedures. Here, happiness is assigned to the truth of love, while the truth of politics is accompanied by the affect of enthusiasm, that of science by the affect of joy, and that of art by the affect of lust (Badiou 2011a, p. 406ff. Badiou/Tarby 2017: 119, 172).

If one asks to what extent the various affects of the various truths and truth- or fidelity-procedures are compossible with one another and, in this compossibility, provide the reserves to defend the autonomy of truths against their capitalonihilistic consumption in technology, culture, administration and sex, one is immediately referred to the greatest of all anti-philosophers, Friedrich Nietzsche. In 1888, in one of his most important posthumous fragments, he had also linked the truth of being, already revealed in his *Birth of Tragedy*, as an “ugly” truth to fear and disgust, and therefore turned to art: “For a philosopher to say, ‘The good and the beautiful are one,’ is infamy; if he goes on to add, ‘also the true,’ one ought to thrash him. Truth is ugly. We possess art lest we perish from truth.” (Nietzsche 1988: 500; cf. also Nietzsche 1993; translated from German, italics added by us)

Badiou, however, can escape punishment because he explicitly acknowledges the “ugliness” of the truth of being, as Nietzsche rightly claimed, but in return can convict Nietzsche of the cardinal error of “sewing up” the truth with only one of the four (or five) truth procedures. (On the problem of “sutures” in nuce Badiou 1999, pp. 61-69) Badiou could therefore reformulate Nietzsche’s posthumous fragment from a half-truth into a whole truth as follows: “The truth of being is ugly; we have the truths of art, science, politics and love so that we do not perish from the truth of being.” In this relationship between truths, he would have determined at the same time what their compossibility in general consists of, preceding and transcending any epochal compossibility. And: he would have convincingly explained why philosophy and its ethics are “affirmationist” in that they can truly affirm both the tragic character of being and the radical critique of art, science, politics and love of this tragic nature. (Badiou/Ruda/Völker 2007) That would be the power in all powerlessness, in which the “consistency” of his *ethics* as a doctrine lies not only and not primarily in fidelity to truths, but in a “fidelity to fidelity” that precedes every specific procedure of fidelity and, if necessary, repeatedly teaches first of all what “be faithful to fidelity” means. (Badiou 2011b: 53, 47, in context 44ff) This, developed to its ultimate conclusion, would be the truth of Existenz. Fidelity to fidelity thus proves to be a repetition of the problem, dating back to Kierkegaard and in this respect core-existentialist, of the “choice of choice” presupposed by every particular choice of good and evil: “In this choice, one does not yet decide whether one wants good or evil; one only chooses that one wants, and thus the opposition between good and evil is established. Those who choose the ethical choose the good, but entirely in abstracto.” (Kierkegaard 1956, p. 265; translation from German)

The test case: humanism without humanism

But what would be the price to pay for this consistency? To put it bluntly, Badiou would have to change sides in the humanism debate between

Sartre and Foucault and thus return to the position he started out with in . He could then also delete the insertions that relativize his repeated and always emphatic references to the “humanity of humans”. Would this make him unfaithful to himself? We don’t think so. Instead, this step backwards would prove the decisive power of truthfulness, which lies not in rigid adherence to the status quo, but in the permanence of his critical reworking. Badiou has already developed this striking revaluation of the term in relation to its common meaning in *Ethics*, in which he explicitly defines fidelity as an inventive practice, “since the event was excluded by all the regular laws of the situation (...).An eventual fidelity is a real break (both thought and practised) in the specific order within which the event took place (be it political, loving, artistic or scientific). Faithfulness to the event is a real (thought and practised) break within the order in which the event took place.” (ibid., p. 41f) And: He would not, of course, simply resume his own beginning in the step back where he once rightly left it, but would transform it into something truly new precisely through repetition. With regard to the dispute between humanism and anti-humanism, this would result in the third figure of a “humanism without humanism,” which will be called this because in it there is a truth of man alone in the conscious “putting one’s own life in line” which (not only) for the philosophers discussed here has always been the price of truth that cannot always be paid tangibly. In Badiou’s thinking, the “truth of Existenz” understood in this way referred to the “point” sought in all his paths, at which the “rotation” is decided anew, in which a subject either remains true to its truth and thus to itself, or “reactively” separates itself from it or “obscurely” closes itself off from it (in nuce Badiou 2011c, p. 92ff). It is no coincidence that Badiou speaks of his “heroic determination and his demonstrative discipline” and, consequently, a little later of his “radical choice”: terms whose existentialist tone is as impossible to overlook as it was and is impossible to overlook in the concept “fidelity to fidelity” as a “choice of choice” (ibid., p. 114f).

Literally striking force does not come about by chance in the truth procedure of politics, whose crisis precedes the crisis of other truth procedures insofar as it directly concerns the rule of capital, which consumes not only the planet and all life, but also all truth procedures and thus the “humanity of us humans.” In view of the danger of the totalisation of this domination and the subjugation of all majorities to its regime, Badiou would have to modify his position on the specific point where he draws a radical distinction between the truth procedures of art, science and love on the one hand and those of politics on the other. For while he always describes the first three as “aristocratic” procedures, he considers politics to be a “topologically collective” procedure: “The fact that the central activity of politics is assembly is a local metonymy of its essentially collective and therefore fundamentally universal nature.” (Badiou 2003b: 152; translation from German). However, because the “idea of communism” as the truth of politics has been gradually becoming the preserve of ever

smaller minorities since the end of the 20th century, politics is also transforming into an aristocratic practice in this sense. This is possible because the truth-aristocracy of art, science and love could only be understood in a dialectical twist against the common meaning of the word, insofar as truth as such can necessarily only prove itself as the truth of all, i.e. non-exclusive and non-elitist. Badiou coined the only seemingly paradoxical term “proletarian aristocratism” and assigned it the task of being “elitist for all” in a manner that must always be reflected upon. Its subjective or existential resource can only rely on “what in each individual is not subject to evaluation in terms of the average, the majority, similarity or imitation.” According to the course of our discussion, however, this is precisely where the “truth of Existenz” lies, which Badiou elevates in the passage just quoted to the “non-democratic resource” of the freedom of each and every individual. (Badiou/Ruda/Völker 2007: 31ff)

A materialist dialectic that appropriates this freedom can then continue to rely on Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels’ *Manifesto* as its very first manifesto. There it is said literally – although unfortunately often read the other way round – that “*the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all*” and thus for the classless “association” of humanity. (Marx/Engels 2010: 27) The dialectic will have to reactivate the underlying connections that can be found in the concept of humanity between the “truth of Existenz” in its “most radical individuation” and the truth of Marx’ and Engels’ “human generic being” affirmed by Badiou in a similar interplay of consent and doubt. Under today’s conditions, however, it will also have to rely on Badiou’s own core concept of the event. Badiou himself has explicitly pointed out that the epochal unpredictability of both the Russian and Chinese revolutions was part of their eventful character: At the time, only minorities who were methodologically uncertain of themselves, albeit determined in their convictions, had referred to either of these upheavals. Badiou describes their attitude as “aleatory optimism” in view of the unpredictability of every event, but in the same passage he advises that “we should not lose ourselves in the alternative between optimism and pessimism. For this alternative leads nowhere” (Badiou 2015: 129f.). Nevertheless, materialistic dialectics will be able to rely on this “eschatological reservation” above all else. (Barth 1994: 32)

Conclusion: 4 + 1

If this means we must engage more seriously than ever before with the aristocratic minority of truth processes as understood here, then the question raised here of a fifth truth process that is not tacked on to the four truth processes of art, science, politics and love, but inscribed within them, becomes even more urgent. This is not because it could solve the crisis of truths in the blink of an eye, but because it allows us to better understand this crisis. Following the preceding discussion, it would first have

to be described as the truth process of Existenz and, at the same time, opened up to the concepts of “humanity of man” and the human “Gattungswesen.” Based at the same time on the “existence of a philosophical subject” (Badiou 2016: 77), which is not to be understood in the professional sense of the word, it could also be described as the truth process of philosophy, with the reservation that it is not concerned with the creation of additional truths, but with the concept of their epochal compossibility and compossibility in general. The latter would then be won within the relationship developed above between the “ugly” truth of being as the indissolubly turbid Mannigfaltigung/multiplicity of mere multiplicities framed by the nothing, the void and the graveyard, and the lustful, joyful, enthusiastic and happy truths of art, science, politics and love. It would have to be tested on the materialities of these processes: on sensuality (art), on the letter (science), on the collective or association (politics) and on difference (love). (Badiou/Ruda/Völker 2007: 26f). It would find its own first and last point of probation and verification in the existentiell execution of “ethics in general,” whose strict formalism grants the particular ethics the freedom to decide on their matters. If the truth process of philosophy and philosophical Existenz ultimately remains to be thought in its dialectic with religion and religious Existenz, then it is not only because Heidegger’s “Potentiality-for-Being-a-whole” and Sartre’s “desire to become God” were convincingly confronted with their theological origins. For just as Sartre elevated the impossible possibility of absolute Existenz on the last page of his magnum opus on the “reversal of Christ’s passion” (Sartre 1966: 784), Badiou chose none other than Paul as the key witness to his main concept of the event and its fundamental universalism. He has read him as the “poet” of a “narrative” or “fable” and has certainly not done justice to the matter of Pauline thought on this one point. (Badiou 2002b: 8, 12f; Translation from German) Insofar as the dispute over this truth will remain the proletarian-aristocratic affair of a perhaps lost minority in a world staggering towards its nothing, its void and perhaps its graveyard, we leave its determination to the key witness of the very cause of the universalism of our Existenz. Badiou has reminded us of the two most important truths that Paul left to all human beings without exception: that we are not under the law of any situation whatsoever, but under the grace of the event, and that in faithfulness to this grace we are no longer Jews or Greeks, no longer men or women, no longer servants-and-maids or masters-and-mistresses, but the militants of the power *and* powerlessness of our truths, which are at once ugly and uplifting. (ibid., p. 120 et seq., 139 et seq. Paul, Romans 6:14 and Galatians 3:28 respectively)

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